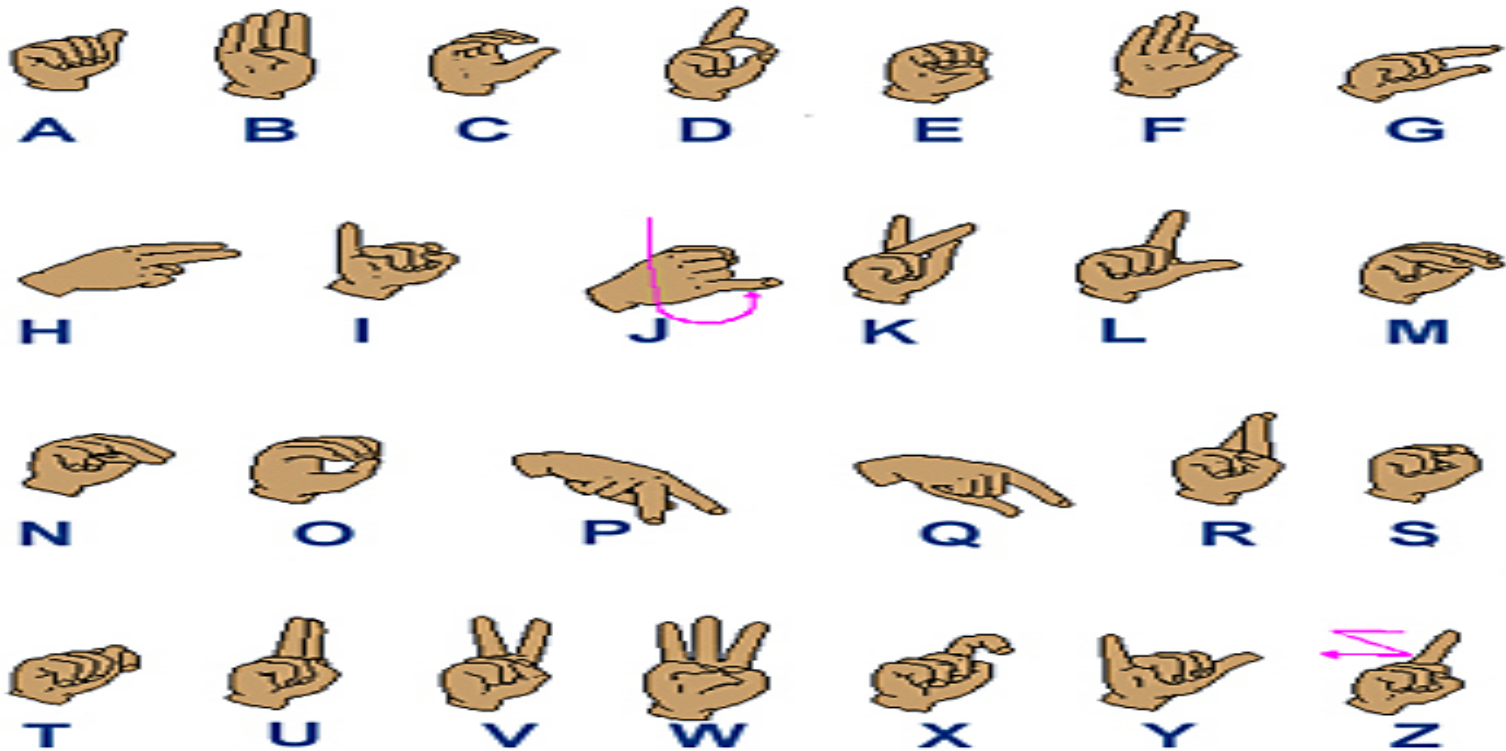


Communication with the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (HOH)



Data



- 3 out of 250 newborns are diagnosed with hearing loss
- 1 out of 10 people experience hearing loss during their life
- 1 out of 3 senior citizens have hearing loss
- There are more than 500,000 Deaf and HoH individuals throughout the state of Arizona.

The Deaf

- A shared community with American Sign Language (ASL) as the common language.
- Most people who sign cannot lipread.
- 9 out of 10 Deaf people grew up in a “hearing” household.
- The average reading age of a signing person is third grade.
- A visual community with distinct rules of etiquette.

The Hard of Hearing (HoH)

- A sub-culture without a shared language.
- A variety of hearing losses: from birth, late-deafened in childhood and late deafened in adulthood.
- Hearing loss profoundly affects speech recognition, certain sounds are missing.
- Most do not know ALS.
- Many wear hearing aids, the usefulness of which is dependent on the environment.
- Lipreading is educated guess work, only 25-30% of sounds produced are seen on the lips.

County already provides services for Deaf/HOH customers and employees.

- The County Recorder's website currently uses DeafLink in customer outreach.
- For Deaf History Month Maricopa County Parks and Recreation hosted an ASL translated hike in the Estrella Mountain Park.
- Maricopa County Superior Courts have a well publicized Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodation Request Form.
- Maricopa County Superior Court's August 2008 newsletter "The Judicial Branch News" contained an article focusing on recruiting a representative workforce, including the Deaf/HoH.
- Personal experience with two different County departments I found supervisors and managers to be concerned, but sometimes lacking guidance as to appropriate actions.

What else can Maricopa County do?

- Include Deaf/HOH awareness and sensitivity education as part of mandatory diversity training for all new employees.
- Expand Supervisor and Management training to include situational role play for working with Deaf/HOH employees. Educate Supervisors and Management on Assistive Devices.
- Implement County Recorder's Office accommodation outreach and service for all customer facing departments.
- Provide an effective mechanism for front line staff to access ALS interpreting services in a timely manor for customers. (Perhaps being able to book an interpreter via the EBC?) Secondly provide customers with the option of booking interpreting services with similar mechanism to the Superior Court's accommodation request.

Tips for Clear Communication

- Take your time, relax. It is stressful for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing too!
- If appropriate use a note pad to write down your points.
- Talk face to face. Speak at eye level. Do not chew gum, smoke, talk behind a newspaper, or cover your mouth while speaking. Also, make sure there is adequate light so that the movements of lips and facial expressions are clearly visible.
- Turn off the radio, television, air conditioner, or other background noises. These sounds, taken for granted and ignored by many, are amplified by a hearing aid or cochlear implant and thus interfere with communication with a person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Reword messages. Often a person with a hearing loss is partially dependent on lipreading, because some sounds may not be easily heard even with a hearing aid or cochlear implant. Since some words are easier to lipread than others, rephrasing a message may make it clearer.
- Be aware and considerate in group situations. Only one person should be talking at a time. Also, the person who is hard of hearing may find it helpful to be alerted when the speakers in the conversation change.
- Stay close to the Deaf/ Hard of Hearing. The closer you are, the easier it will be for them to hear your message.
- Situate yourself in good lighting. Try to arrange it so that your face is well illuminated
- It is often helpful to speak distinctly and at a slower rate, this aids clarity. Raising your voice causes distortions and simply amplifies the problem.
- Speech recognition is the most important part of hearing, that is, can you understand the words being spoken?

Useful Links

- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
www.eeoc.gov/facts/deafness.html
- Maricopa County Recorder's Office
<http://recorder.maricopa.gov/elections/assistance.aspx>
- Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing www.agbell.org
- The Job Accommodation Network
www.jan.wvu.edu/media/deaf.htm
- Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
www.acdhh.org
- Valley Center for the Deaf www.vcdaz.org
- Hearing dogs for the Deaf www.dogsforthedeaf.org
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Government www.dhhig.org